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of this type that I have found is that there are very few gloomy pieces among them, far fewer, I am certain, than among the poems written at the time in other forms. *Il Penseroso* seems to have been scarcely more popular and no more imitated than its joyous companion piece. Poems on solitude, contemplation, and similar subjects connected with a love of retirement and seclusion are, to be sure, frequently found and were without doubt influenced by Milton's poem. But these themes are not gloomy any more than is *Il Penseroso*—which, it should be observed, is not *Il Melancholio.* They praise a quiet, contemplative life and they praise it, as Milton does, because it seems to them the happiest life and not because they are depress or because they enjoy gloom. It is a far cry from the mood of *Il Penseroso* to that of the *Night Thoughts* or of such passages as the following from Warton's *Pleasures of Melancholy:*

> But when the world
> Is clad in Midnight's raven-colour'd robe,
> Mid hollow charnal let me watch the flame
> Of taper dim, shedding a livid glare
> Oe'r the wan heaps; while airy voices talk
> Along the glimm'ring wall; or ghastly shape
> At distance seen, invites with beck'ning hand
> My lonesome steps, thro' the far-winding vaults.

Professor Beers apparently uses the terms "elegiac mood," "love of retirement and seclusion," "low spirits," and "Pensive Meditation" interchangeably (*Eng. Romanticism XVIII Cent.*, p. 162), and accordingly, it would seem, groups all the poetry of the mid-eighteenth century which exhibits any of these under what he calls "the *Il Penseroso* school." Then, too, tho he says, "There were various degrees of somberness from the delicate gray of the Wartons to the funereal sable of Young's *Night Thoughts* and Blaire's *Grave,*" Professor Beers fails to call attention to the important fact that the sombreness of one poet differs radically from that of another in kind. We have, for instance, the real tho far from intense melancholy of Gray, the exaggerated love of gloom of Thomas Warton and Walpole—which is genuine only as it comes from a healthy enjoyment of ghosts, mysteries and Gothic architecture,—and the fondness for a retired, studious life which is exprest in *Il Penseroso* and was exemplified by Milton's happy years at Horton. The love of gloom which characterized much of the literature of the middle and later part of the eighteenth century belongs with the fondness for the Middle Ages, for ruins, and for wild nature. It was a part of the romantic and rather sentimental tendencies of the time; it is alien to the mood of *Il Penseroso* and would have been quite the same if Milton's poem had never been written.

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THE MEANING OF VITA NUOVA.

To the Editors of Mod. Lang. Notes.

SIRS:—The word *Nuova* in the title of Dante's famous opuscule is usually interpreted to mean either 'youthful,' or 'new' in the sense of regenerate through his love for Beatrice. Witte in the *Prolegomena* to his edition pretty effectually disposes of the former interpretation but accepts the latter. It has always seemed to me unsatisfactory to connect the idea of regeneration through love with a nine year old boy, even after making all possible allowances for the precocity of genius, and it has long seemed to me that the word might bear another meaning, which, so far as I am aware, has not been proposed. This meaning is that of 'strange,' or 'mystic.'[1] It must be remembered that Dante gives the title in Latin, and that *novus* has at times the sense of 'strange,' 'never before experienced,' while, so far as I know, it does not connote the idea of regeneration. In Italian, too, examples of *nuovo* = strange, are plentiful. The life which Dante describes is certainly a mystic one, in which by meditation and certain conduct he attains an esoteric knowledge of love. I think this is true whether we regard Beatrice as wholly human, wholly allegorical, or partly one and partly the other.

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[1] It is true that Witte pointed out the sense of *meraviglioso, straordinario,* which *nuovo* and *novello* sometimes have, especially in poetic language (*Anmerkungen zu den Gedichten der V. N., in D. A.'s Lyrische Gedichte übers. u. erl. von Kannegiesser u. Witte, Leipz., 1852*), but he does not interpret this meaning as equivalent to 'mystic,' nor does he adopt it as explaining the title; also that Rossetti uses the word 'strange' as a translation of *nuovo* in the text, but he expressly adheres to the translation New Life (in the sense of regenerate life), calling this, however, the more 'mystical' interpretation (*Early Italian Poets,* Part II, Introduction).

There are fifteen examples in the *Vita Nuova* of the use of the word *nuovo*, beside one of the superlative *novissimo* (see Sheldon-White, *Concordanza*, pp. 417, 420–1). Of these sixteen instances it seems to me that nine lend themselves readily to the interpretation which I have suggested, as follows:

Sonnet 7, line 3.
Chapter xv, line 1.
Chapter xviii, line 17.
Sonnet 11, line 14.
Canzone 2, line 13 of stanza 1.
Chapter xxiv, line 10.
Canzone 3, line 5 of stanza 5.
Chapter xxxix, line 1.
Sonnet 25, line 3.

In the cases of Chapter xxxi, line 8, and Sonnet 22, l. 10, I think the interpretation is at least possible.

It is not my intention to elaborate here this suggestion, by reference to Dante's other works or otherwise; I merely give it for what it may be worth.

Two other questions:—Was there any connection in Dante's mind between his use of *nova* in the title and the *dolce stil nuovo*, which treats mystically of love, or with the recurrent mystical number *nove*, so similar in sound? As he used a symbolism of numbers and colors, why not a symbolism of sound? (*cf. Primavera*).

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An Obscure Allusion in Herder.
Supplementary Note.

To the Editors of Mod. Lang. Notes.

Sirs:—In the *Publications of the Modern Language Association* (Vol. xxii, pp. 550 f.), I suggested a possible explanation of a passage in Herder for which Suphan failed to find any authority in ancient literature. Herder wrote[1]: "Der wahre Tempel des Geschmacks ist nicht eine Orientalische Pagode, ein Ruhesitz, wo man als am Ende seiner Wallfahrt sich niederlässt; er ist vielmehr wie der Tempel des Marcellus gebauet; die Pforte des Geschmacks, auch in Münzen, ein Durchgang zur Wissenschaft: zur Wissenschaft, welche es wolle." I thought this description might be a vague reminiscence of Moses Mendelssohn. It appears, however, that Mendelssohn[2] took the description from Winckelmann, from whom Herder might just as well have got it. Winckelmann, attempting to show allegory even in the architecture of the ancients, thus interprets the temple of Marcellus[3]: "Noch gelehrter war der Bau des Tempels der Tugend und der Ehre, welchen Marcellus unternahm. Da er die Beute, welche er in Sicilien gemachet hatte, hierzu bestimmete, wurde ihm sein Vorhaben durch die Oberpriester, deren Gutachten er vorher einholete, untersaget, unter dem Vorwande, dass ein einziger Tempel nicht zwo Gottheiten fassen könnte. Marcellus liess also zwei Tempel nahe an einander bauen, (Plutarch. Marcell. [c. 28.]) dergestalt, dass man durch den Tempel der Tugend gehen musste, um in den Tempel der Ehre zu gelangen; um dadurch zu lehren, dass man allein durch Ausübung der Tugend zur wahren Ehre geführet werde. Dieser Tempel war vor der Porta Capena (Vulpii Latium, t. 2. l. 2. c. 20, p. 175)." Mendelssohn's comment seems not injudicious: "Die Bedeutung ist offenbar, allein die Unternehmung selbst scheint allzu sehr von dem Geiste der Baukunst entfernt zu sein. Die Beschreibung eines solchen Gebäudes macht den Sinn der Allegorie weit anschaulicher, als das Gebäude selbst; ein untrügliches Kennzeichen, dass der Einfall mehr zur Dichtkunst als zur Baukunst gehört." But Mendelssohn's criticism is directed against Winckelmann, not against Plutarch, who says nothing about the relation in which the buildings stood to each other. That the builder's idea was quite so allegorical as Winckelmann assumed, is very doubtful. But Herder apparently accepted Winckelmann's view, and in the passage in question referred to him rather than to Mendelssohn.

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[1] *Werke*, ed. Suphan, iii, p. 382.

[2] *Über die Hauptgrundsätze, Ges. Schriften*, Lpz., 1843, i, p. 298.

[3] *Erläuterung der Gedanken von der Nachahmung der griechischen Werke, Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Eiselein, Donauöschingen, 1825, i, p. 197.